

In the News

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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Message from the Mayor

On Thursday, February 5, I delivered my annual State of the District address. In the address, I touched on many issues facing our city, as well as the challenges that lie ahead of us as we work together to create an even greater Washington, DC.

Imagine, for a minute, that you just returned to Washington, DC, after being gone for five years. Think about all you'd find missing. The massive deficits? Gone. The receiverships—gone. Two thousand abandoned properties—gone. Snow on the roads—gone on time. The control board—gone early. And decades of despair and disinvestment? Gone forever.

Now, think about what's in its place. Twice as many children immunized. Families moving into 12,000 new units of affordable housing. Teen pregnancy down. More people with health insurance. More people leaving welfare for work. More seniors with prescription drugs. More substance abusers with treatment. And more jobs for 43,000 District residents.

Five years ago, we were not adequately prepared for a terrorist attack. Now, when it comes to being ready for an emergency, we're first in the nation. Five years ago, businesses were fleeing our city and empty offices languished for months, even years. Today, the number one real estate city in the world is not Paris. It's not New York. It's right here in Washington, DC. Now, I know some people don't like it when we talk about economic development. But we should never apologize for trying to bring stores, jobs and affordable homes to communities that have struggled for too long without them.

In the education realm, we're working to transform 15 of our lowest-performing public schools. That has meant new educators, new staff, new resources—and, no surprise—better results. Just look at Noyes and Simon elementary schools: their reading and math scores went up by more than 30 percent last year. I have committed to transforming at least five new public schools every year—and next year Ballou High School, the scene of so much recent violence, must be one of them. We will do more to focus the attention of every agency and community group on our most troubled kids—by helping them when we can, and finding good alternative schools for them when we must. We will do more to get answers from our children, including hosting a Youth Summit focused on crime and violence.

And we will do more to give our law enforcement officers the tools they need to get the job done. They need a new Juvenile Justice bill that will help them hold juvenile criminals—and their parents—more accountable. I've submitted it, and I am asking the Council to pass it.

Our police department should have control over all crime-fighting in our city, whether it happens in our housing projects or at our schools. My goal is to have 3,800 officers by the end of September. That's 200 more officers than we had a year ago and every single one will be in our neighborhoods. But I ask the Council to work with me to do even more.

It's not just public safety and education. We must ensure that all people—not just some—have quality health care in our city. We should be angry that our HIV/AIDS cases are 10 times the national average. We should be angry that our chances of dying from heart disease or cancer are much higher if we are poor or African-American. But, more than anything, we want to help people prevent disease before they ever show up in an emergency room. And that requires access to health insurance. We began by expanding Medicaid to people most at risk—including children and those living with HIV/AIDS. But that still left a large group out—those who couldn't qualify for Medicaid and couldn't afford private insurance.

It was for them that we launched the DC Healthcare Alliance. Now, more than 50,000 people have been served by the Alliance. I've met parents who can finally take their sick children to a real doctor, not an emergency room. I've talked to immigrants who tell me what it means for their families to have health care for the first time in their lives.

Public safety, Education, Health Care. Those are the tough challenges we face on the path ahead. I look forward to all of you taking this journey with me. To view the full text of my State of the District address, please visit the DC.gov homepage at: <http://dc.gov>.



AGENCY WEBSITES

[Office of Tax and Revenue](#)

[Department of Parks and Recreation](#)

[Department of Employment Services](#)

[Metropolitan Police Department](#)

[Office of Boards and Commissions](#)

[Commission on the Arts and Humanities](#)

Efforts at Ballou High School

Several weeks following a tragic shooting at Ballou High School that left one student—James Richardson—dead, and another injured, our city is continuing an aggressive effort to turn things around at the school by improving its public safety environment and creating a safe learning environment. We have counselors at Ballou to help students, teachers and parents during this difficult grieving process. We're supporting more community leaders and Roving Leaders from our Department of Parks and Recreation in the area. And now, the Ballou community has a place they can reach out to for help when they need it. We are taking several specific steps to improve the situation at Ballou.

First, our Department of Mental Health is managing a youth hotline to aid the Ballou community. Ballou and other District youth can seek help, garner information and receive referrals to organizations already working in the community. That number is 1-866-245-6340.

Our Metropolitan Police Department (MPD)—led by Chief Charles Ramsey—has revised the security plan for Ballou. Assistant MPD Chief Winston Robinson is working closely with parents, citizens, Councilmember Sandy Allen, School Board Member William Lockridge and District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) staff to create a plan to make the school safer under the leadership of MPD.

In recent weeks, MPD officers have been stationed at major exits at Ballou, and students are required to enter the school through four metal detectors, while nearly 50 security cameras watch over them. Two DC police officers are also assigned to the school.

Furthermore, we're working with the Department of Human Services Strong Families program, along with DCPS, to identify the group of youth in the Ballou Community most at risk. Services and/or case management will be provided to these youth and their families in a comprehensive manner. Our schools must be sanctuaries for our children. Violence has no place in school buildings. We are in the process of rededicating ourselves to the protection of our children who rely on us to keep them safe. The agencies of the District government will support Interim DCPS Superintendent Elfreda Massie as she works to provide our schoolchildren with a safe learning environment. Bringing an end to the violence takes a collective, community effort.

Lead in DC Water

Like many of our city's residents, I am concerned about recent reports that our city's drinking water may, in some cases, contain unusually high levels of lead.

There has been a lot of information flying around regarding this situation—specifically, what and where the potential risks are. I want to take this opportunity to clarify some things, and I want to let our citizens know what we are doing about the situation.

Last week, I met with DC Water and Sewer Authority (WASA) officials who informed me that of the roughly 160,000 water service lines—the pipes that run from the main pipe under the street to single-family residences—23,000 are made of lead. These pipes have been in the ground for 50 to 100 years and until recently, tests have not shown any significant problems with them. In recent months, however, tests have revealed high levels of lead in the water of some of the houses that have these lead service lines. While we do not know what, if any, direct health impacts these lead levels might have, we don't want to take chances and we need to ensure that people are safe. At this point, we don't know why the measured levels of lead have spiked. WASA scientists and engineers are working with outside experts to figure that out.

It is unlikely that newer residences, multi-family, commercial, and institutional buildings would have lead service lines. Therefore, the scope of the potential problem is limited. Also, most of the older, single-family homes have cast-iron or copper service lines and are not thought to be affected by this problem. I know there is a lot of concern about who knew what when, and why the public was not notified earlier about these recent readings of high lead levels. These are legitimate concerns and WASA and its board of directors need to address these concerns.

My staff and I have been working daily with WASA and Councilmember Carol Schwartz to understand the magnitude of the problem and to figure out what needs to be done. In particular, our DC Department of Health has been working closely with WASA to provide information, free water testing and health information to the public and to make testing available for children, who are more vulnerable to the impacts of lead.



LINK TO OTHER WEBSITES

[DC Agenda](#)

[Hands on DC](#)

[DC Convention and Tourism](#)

[DC Public Library](#)

Lead in DC Water (cont.)

To ensure that we're doing all that we need to do, Councilmember Carol Schwartz, as Chair of the Council Committee on Public Works and Environment, and I have formed an interagency task force to help manage this situation and to oversee and coordinate an effective response to the problem.

I'd like to commend Councilmember Schwartz and the Council for their leadership and quick response to this evolving problem.

WASA encourages customers to contact its Lead Services Hotline at (202) 787-2732 or WQP2003@dcwasa.com if they have questions about whether a lead service line serves their home. The Lead Services Hotline is open from 7 am - 7 pm, Monday - Friday and 9 am - 5 pm Saturday and Sunday.

WASA will provide a free testing kit upon request to customers if they have reason to believe their property is served by a lead service line in public space. WASA will forward the test kit to a customer within two days, provide free pick-up and test results within 30 days.

For more information on lead in our city's drinking water, please visit the Environmental Protection Agency's website on lead at: http://www.epa.gov/region03/leaddc_faq.htm.

Fannie Mae Check Presentation

On February 10, I joined several local and national leaders for the Fannie Mae Foundation's Help the Homeless Check Presentation and the presentation of the Good Neighbor Award. This event was a true celebration of a partnership that's thriving and helping alleviate poverty across the Washington, DC region.

The 2003 Help the Homeless (HTH) program marked the 16th anniversary of this community-wide funding collaborative. This year, the Fannie Mae Foundation garnered the support of additional corporate sponsors, and accelerated its efforts to reach out to young people. This year:

- More than 350 corporate partners contributed more than \$2.3 million
- Over 30,000 walkers participated in the annual Walkathon on the National Mall
- 512 mini-walks took place, engaging 70,000 young people from area schools and faith-based organizations
- 116 DC public schools participated in the program's mini-walk initiative
- \$6.5 million—a new record—was raised to help 173 local homeless service providers

The Good Neighbor Award was developed eight years ago in response to Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton's challenge to the Fannie Mae Foundation to recognize individuals and groups for their exemplary work with the homeless. Now, the foundation recognizes three awardees who have made outstanding volunteer contributions. Each Good Neighbor receives a plaque and grant of \$1,000 to the agency of their choice.

This year, Raina Rose Tagle received the award for the District of Columbia. Raina served as board president of Miriam's Kitchen from 2000 through 2002. Under her leadership, Miriam's Kitchen went from a breakfast feeding program to a financially stable, social service agency that not only serves breakfast but also provides case management, an array of creative engagement programs, and a new transitional housing program.

Through initiatives like Help the Homeless and the Good Neighbor Award, the District of Columbia and other cities across the country are learning that it takes partnerships to find solutions to poverty. Certainly, government can't do it alone. As Mayor of Washington, DC, I welcome Fannie Mae's efforts and pledge our city's continued support of this inspiring program dedicated to service and helping.

The great Dr. Martin Luther King, who we honor this month for his spirit of serving mankind, once said, "Everybody can be great, because everyone can serve."



Mayor's Week in Review

Mayor Delivers State of the District Speech

On **February 5**, I delivered my annual State of the District speech at the historic Lincoln Theatre on U Street in Northwest.

Mayor Participates in Online Discussion

On **February 6**, I participated in an online discussion on WashingtonPost.com on a number of issues in our city. Please visit the chat on the web at:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A13478-2004Feb4.html>

Mayor Attends Funerals for DC Youth

On **February 7**, I attended funerals for slain DC youth James Richardson and Princess Hansen—two of our city's young people whose lives were tragically cut short by violence.

Mayor Visits Evans Middle School

On **February 10**, I attended a walk-through at Evans Middle School in Northeast. This was part of a recent tour that I took of our city's schools. Evans MS serves a population of 230 students in grades six through eight. It has been a DCPS transformation school since 2002.

Mayor Delivers Remarks at Neighborhood Citizen Summits

On **February 10, 11, 17, 18** and **19**, I attended a series of neighborhood Citizen Summits in Wards 5, 3, 8, 4 and 2. These summits were a chance for residents to take a hard look at where we see our city headed in the future, and the progress we've made so far. For more information on the summits, please visit our Neighborhood Action website at: <http://neighborhoodaction.dc.gov>.

District Activities



Mayor Williams and Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton present proceeds from the Fannie Mae 16th Annual Help the Homeless Walkathon.



Mayor Williams delivers remarks during a series of follow-up neighborhood citizen summits.



Mayor Williams poses for photo during courtesy visit with Ambassador Bayney Karran of Guyana.



Mayor Williams, DC Councilmember Carol Schwartz, City Administrator Robert Bobb and WASA officials discuss status of lead contamination in DC water.



Community News

- [Office of Cable TV Launches New Health Policy Show](#)
- [Mayor Delivers State of the District Address](#)
- [District Chooses a Developer to Revitalize Georgia Avenue Petworth Metro](#)

[View all News Releases](#)

Upcoming Events

2/17 to 2/26	Black History Month Film Festival 6 pm Every Thursday in February 901 G Street, NW Room A-5 Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library
2/17 to 2/29	Eyes to “See” Photo Exhibit 901 G Street, NW Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library
2/17 to 2/29	Where Do We Go From Here? Exhibition of Quilts by Wendell George Brown 901 G Street, NW Room A-5 Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library
2/17 to 2/23	Building and Bridging Communities: African Immigration in the Nation’s Capital 901 G Street, NW Room A-5 Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library A photo panel exhibit on African immigrants
2/17 to 2/29	Illusion of Time Ward 5 901 G Street, NW Room A-5 Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library Painting and collages by JoJo Fekwa For more information on other Black History Month events at MLK Library, visit http://www.dclibrary.org/calendar
2/23	Neighborhood Citizen Summit Ward 1 7 pm 16th & Harvard Streets, NW All Souls Church
2/24	Neighborhood Citizen Summit Ward 7 7 pm 4103 Benning Road, NE Boys & Girls Club
2/26	Neighborhood Citizen Summit Ward 6 1000 G Street, NE Sherwood Recreation Center

